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The Life of Nelson, the Embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain. By A. T. MAHAN, D. C. L., LL. D., Captain in the United States Navy. (Boston : Little, Brown and Co. 1897. Two vols., pp. xiii, 454 ; xvi, 427.)

CAPTAIN MAHAN'S latest book is his best ; these two volumes fitly crown the work done in their three predecessors. It is not astonishing that this standard life is already passing into a new edition. It has simply displaced all its predecessors except one, that of Southey, which is the vade-mecum of British patriotism, a stimulant of British loyalty, literature of high quality, but in no sense a serious historical or psychological study. The author of the volumes under review has followed the same scientific method which he used so successfully in the first three of the series, but, conceding what is just and right to them, his results in these are better because his material was better. He has followed Nelson day by day throughout life in a correspondence which was not edited for political and personal considerations as was that of Napoleon ; besides he is dealing with a man of his own blood and his own profession ; we had almost said of his own time, for unlike Napoleon, Nelson was a man of the nineteenth century. The former was essentially a medieval Latin modified a little by contact with central Europe, and such training as he had was in the conceptions of an earlier century.

The reader will therefore find in this book three things : an unbroken series of verified historical facts related in minute detail ; a complete picture of the hero, with every virtue justly estimated but with no palliation of weakness or fault ; and lastly a triumphant vindication of a thesis novel and startling to most, that the earth's barriers are continental, its easy and defensible highways those of the trackless ocean. The facts of course were already known, but they were not known in connection with the great tide to which they were contributory, nor as compelled in form and sequence by the tremendous character of a genius never before completely understood or portrayed.

This is in reality the great feature of the book, that Nelson finally stands forth as the man he was. The book is adorned by a series of admirable portraits, and the author has made them live again by his study of Nelson's letters, so that his readers get a familiar acquaintance with the great admiral's appearance at every stage, almost as if listening to an appreciative contemporary. Captain Mahan shows us the boy, youth and man : in gesture, carriage and style—the very part and cut of the hair is carefully described. Nelson's health, his wounds, his seasickness, the interchange of relations between mind and body, all are minutely described. We see in lifelike reality his charms and his virtues offset by his vanity and short-temper ; his timidity and leonine boldness contrasted ; his passion for glory moderated by his sense of honor and devotion to professional duty ; his extreme sensitiveness to criticism combined with his reckless defiance of official restraint in any great crisis ; his diplomacy, strategy and tactics, his frailty and criminal folly ; all

these we have delineated in graceful fluent style against the background of the times sketched in with master-strokes. The author is true in a high sense, because he knows thoroughly the close-knitted web of the events throughout the contemporary world, and apprehends the intricate modification of one series of facts by another at all times in all men. He is indulgent and sympathetic, not in order to confuse his hero with an evolutionary process, but the more completely to separate himself from his subject and carve it in the round; he is as cogent and vigorous in the modeling of Nelson's defects as in exhibiting the perspective of his strength and virtue.

Nor is this book in any sense polemic except in its calm and merciless logic: the conclusions of the writer are not reiterated and thundered but they are forcibly suggested. To the concluding work of a cyclical comprehensive scheme, we might expect a peroration. There is none, but we rise from the perusal of these volumes with the unalterable conviction that Captain Mahan has revealed the modern world to itself. The English-speaking races are notoriously devoid of theory in the conduct of their affairs. In developing their institutions they build stone upon stone, course upon course, and finding their edifice commodious are indifferent to its symmetry. The development of sea-power in Great Britain came through the necessity of self-preservation; it was observed, but not analytically examined. Mahan's high place as a historian is assured not merely by his accuracy, his dispassionate judgment, his insight into character, and his constructive imagination, but above all by the revelation he has made that the course of history is in this age and for long to be determined by the expansion of European civilization into the ends of the earth, and by the determination of international relations not upon land alone, but upon the broad expanse of the ocean, both as highway and battlefield. Trafalgar had little immediate effect upon the course of contemporaneous events in continental Europe, but it settled the fact that there would be a new balance of power for succeeding generations in the settlement and commerce of the greater Europe throughout Asia, Africa and America, and in their connection one with the other as controlled by sea-power.

As far as we know there has been but one attack on Captain Mahan's accuracy and critical judgment. This was in connection with Nelson's conduct at Naples in June, 1799. How the author deals with presumptuous rashness and incompetency can be seen in the second edition of the book. We know of no finer example of historical criticism. Of psychological analysis, the finest specimen in the work is the account of Nelson's relationship with Lady Hamilton. The woman is depicted in all her meretricious tawdriness, the man in all his conspicuous virtue; yet in the nice account of how the hero fell there is a perfect illustration of the proverb that the excesses of conscious virtue are more dangerous than those of vice, since the former are not restrained by conscience. For masterpieces of historical condensation we refer the reader to paragraphs like that on page 63 of Vol. II., which is but one of many scattered throughout the book.

It is not the province of this journal to outline the contents of great books nor to abridge the strength of a great picture into the feeble lines of a miniature; if it were, neither would be possible in this case, for the self-restraint of the author makes it impossible to prune or omit anything written by him. The book is one to be read and pondered exactly as it stands. The over-haste of those who skim and skip cannot put the reviewer under contribution for their knowledge or opinions, even if he were willing so to be taxed.

It appears to us that in the case of this book the reviewer can have but one of those functions ordinarily attributed to him. The student of history must constantly recall the author's point of view; Captain Mahan's is that of a naval expert. We gravely doubt whether he sufficiently recalls the duty imposed by his own skill as a writer. This book will be read by thousands of general readers who will justly consider it final. For such a public we believe he should have explained the moral as well as the legal aspects of certain events: for example in dealing with the battle of Copenhagen, we should have felt more content, could he have been more emphatic in his dealing with Nelson's notorious *ruse de guerre*. We doubt again whether the average student can understand the exact truth when he reads that "Prussia *promptly* adhered to the Armed Neutrality;" she was prompt to be sure, but most reluctant. Nor do we care to find the dubious pages of Bourrienne quoted as authority for Napoleon's conduct. These and some other similar cases of a too concise accuracy in the use of words are not of great importance in themselves nor numerous enough to constitute a blemish, but the reader should remember that Captain Mahan is a man of war who, although a fascinating writer and general historian, is chiefly concerned with history as a department of his profession and does not primarily regard it as a discipline of ethics.

Sir Robert Peel, from his Private Papers. Edited for his Trustees by CHARLES STUART PARKER, sometime M.P. for the County and for the City of Perth, and late Fellow of University College, Oxford. With a Chapter on his Life and Character by his Grandson, the Hon. GEORGE PEEL. Vols. II and III. (London: John Murray, 1889. Pp. [25], 602, [8], 663.)

PEEL held office for twenty years. He served under George III., George IV., William IV. and Queen Victoria, and was three times prime minister. His active political career began in 1810, when he became Under-Secretary for the Colonies in the Tory administration of Perceval, and it was continued until his death in 1850, when although out of office and no longer leader of the Conservative party, he was still a member of the House of Commons. Mr. Parker, the editor of the Peel Papers, early in the second volume records a conversation which he had with Gladstone in respect to Peel. Gladstone, who began his official career under Peel, then affirmed that, as there were two Pitts, one before and the other after the French Revolution, so there were two Peels, one before